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Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission a report prepared by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21). The present report outlines PARIS21 efforts to promote the use of better statistics as a central part of the enabling environment for development progress, particularly through support to countries in the design, implementation and monitoring of national strategies for the development of statistics with a focus on low-income countries, through methodological advice, advocacy and the promotion of donor collaboration in statistical support programmes. The Commission may wish to take note of the progress and future directions of PARIS21 work.

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Report of the Steering Committee of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century

I. Introduction

1. With the increasing emphasis on managing for development results, national policymakers and the international development community have become increasingly aware of the importance of statistics in informing and designing development interventions. The Second International Round Table on Managing for Development Results called on countries to design national strategies for the development of statistics to provide a framework for strengthening statistical capacity across the entire national statistical system in order to meet evolving national and international user needs and priorities for statistics in a more coordinated, synergistic and efficient manner. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) is assisting countries in the development of their strategies by drafting methodological advice, promoting and facilitating donor collaboration, producing statistical advocacy tools and organizing regional workshops to discuss issues and share experiences.

2. With the increasing international focus on results-based management, national policymakers and the international development community have become increasingly aware that good statistics are part of the enabling environment for development. Strengthening statistical capacity is therefore essential to support the design, monitoring and evaluation of national development plans, including poverty reduction strategies, sector strategies and the Millennium Development Goals.

3. In recognition of the development community's reliance on timely, high-quality statistics to manage for results, the Second International Round Table on Managing for Development Results, held in Marrakech, Morocco, in February 2004, issued the six-part Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics, which encourages all developing countries to design and implement national strategies for the development of statistics to improve the evidence base by providing a strategic framework for developing relevant poverty-focused statistics.

4. A national strategy provides a country with a focus for strengthening statistical capacity across the entire national statistical system. The national strategy will provide a vision for where the national statistical system should be in 5 to 10 years and will set milestones for getting there. It will provide a robust framework and action plan for building statistical capacity to meet both current and future data needs. In particular, the aim is to align statistical development with wider poverty-focused national development programmes and strategies.[1]

5. PARIS21 focuses its efforts on assisting developing countries in the design, implementation and monitoring of national strategies in order to have, inter alia, nationally owned and produced data for all Millennium Development Goals indicators and all development policy needs by 2010. The overall goal of PARIS21 is to develop a culture of evidence-based policymaking and implementation which serves to improve governance and government effectiveness in reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

[1] For more detailed discussion of national strategies for the development of statistics, see E/CN.3/2005/18.

II. Evaluation of the PARIS21

6. At the PARIS21 Steering Committee meeting held in June 2005, members agreed on a light evaluation of the impact, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of PARIS21, which would also consider the future of PARIS21 after 2006. Conclusions drawn from the evaluation, completed in early 2006, included the successfulness of the national strategy for the development of statistics approach, the appropriateness of PARIS21 activities and work programme to the PARIS21 purpose, the high adaptability of the partnership to the focus on national strategies, and the relevance and effectiveness of PARIS21. Recommendations included assigning a high priority to national strategies and making them more visible in PARIS21 objectives; expanding the PARIS21 mandate to better facilitate the development of national strategies; ensuring that advocacy work be prioritized as an essential element in national strategies; and expanding the PARIS21 coordination role to improve conditions for better cooperation between its secretariat and involved partners. Steering Committee members also identified providing assistance to strategy implementation as a key area of future work for PARIS21. Based on the results and recommendations of the evaluation, the Steering Committee authorized an extension of PARIS21 beyond 2006 and agreed a renewed mandate, modalities for a strengthened PARIS21 and revised governance arrangements for PARIS21.

III. Progress in PARIS21 activities

7. PARIS21 supports country efforts to design, implement and monitor their national strategies for the development of statistics, primarily through the following types of activities: (a) advocacy and the development of statistical advocacy tools; (b) regional programmes, including resource mobilization; (c) promotion of donor collaboration; (d) development of national strategies methodology; and (e) satellite programmes. Progress made in these areas in 2006 is provided below.

Advocacy and the development of statistical advocacy tools

8. Among the advocacy tools produced by PARIS21 in 2006 are the following:

(a) A video entitled "Food and agriculture statistics in support of development", produced in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations;

(b) A leaflet entitled "Better statistics, better policies, better development outcomes", which was based on a paper entitled "Measuring up to the measurement problem: the role of statistics in evidence-based policy-making";

(c) A brochure entitled "Frequently asked questions on national strategies for the development of statistics";

(d) A five-minute video clip presenting statements from high-level personalities for the 18 November African Statistics Day celebrations; the theme of the 2006 African Statistics Day was "National strategies for the development of statistics".

Regional programmes, including resource mobilization

9. In collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and with the financial support of a United Nations Development Programme-managed Japanese trust fund, PARIS21 organized a series of four subregional forums in Asia.[2] The objectives of the forums were to assess the current status of strategic statistical planning in the countries; to identify the successes and constraints being experienced in implementing existing plans; and to consider solutions to those constraints and practical next steps. ESCAP and PARIS21 are currently designing a programme of follow-up to the forums, which will be implemented in 2007.

10. After a series of regular workshops held in the subregion since 2004, the directors of Central American national statistical offices presented to the international community in September 2006 their finalized national strategies, along with their requests for funding strategy implementation. In early October 2006, PARIS21 organized a meeting on launching a national strategies programme for the Andean Community, at which participants agreed to a series of future workshops.

11. Francophone African countries have started their strategy design with funding from the World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building and the African Development Bank (AfDB). Some of those countries are implementing their strategies, updating existing strategies or seeking funds for strategy implementation. The PARIS21 secretariat co-organized and participated in a series of videoconferences with francophone African national strategies design teams and donors to organize the series of national strategies design workshops. PARIS21 was represented at several meetings throughout anglophone and francophone Africa to launch AfDB support to national strategies design processes. These meetings also provided the opportunity to meet heads of national statistical organizations or their representatives, to make presentations of the partnership work and to disseminate advocacy materials. PARIS21 joined the International Monetary Fund for two missions to Dakar and Ouagadougou to discuss the updating of General Data Dissemination System metadata, using the Data Quality Assessment Framework, and to draft a work programme to be included in poverty reduction strategy papers under revision.

12. In collaboration with its partners, PARIS21 prepared a preliminary worldwide report in April 2006 on progress in designing national strategies. According to information available on the 105 countries included in the report, 34 countries had strategies in place, 54 were at various stages in preparing strategies and only 17 countries neither had strategies in place nor had started to design one, though a number of these had expressed their intention to do so.

Promotion of donor collaboration

13. PARIS21 launched a pilot light reporting exercise of donor support to statistical capacity-building in sub-Saharan Africa. The approach of the pilot exercise was to collect information directly from headquarters of both technical and

[2] The four subregional forums held in Asia were the following: (a) South Asian countries, Colombo, December 2005; (b) Central Asian countries, Bishkek, May 2006; (c) South-East Asian countries, Bangkok, June 2006; and (d) East and North-East Asian countries, Ulaanbaatar, October 2006.

financial partners. In this first round, 56 partners were contacted, of which 20 were bilateral donors, 17 multilateral agencies, 3 were regional organizations, 11 were subregional organizations, 4 were statistical training centres and 1 was a foundation. The results of the pilot exercise were presented in a two-volume document, entitled "Review of support to statistical capacity-building in sub-Saharan Africa: from reporting to collaboration".

14. The main findings of the pilot exercise suggest that:

(a) Partners often do not maintain a centralized system on operations and use of funds due to:

(i) Decentralization of decision-making on the use of aid;

(ii) A shift of development assistance to budgetary support;

(b) Statistics are not always identified as sector, so funding for statistical activities is difficult to identify;

(c) Collaboration between bilateral donor agencies and their statistical offices is not always well coordinated;

(d) Estimating the value of technical assistance for statistical development (experts and training) is not easy (even if statistical activities were identified, amounts are often not specified).

15. The PARIS21 secretariat undertook country-level verification of the light reporting exercise information collected from partners' headquarters in Niger, Ethiopia and Mauritania. The country missions concluded that: (a) information is more readily accessible at country level; (b) national statistical offices are not always aware of funding to sector statistics; and (c) donor coordination varies in countries, both in terms of level and mechanisms. The missions confirmed the usefulness of a partner reporting system on statistical development for the preparation of national strategies.

16. At the eighth session of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA), held in Montreal, Canada, in September 2006, PARIS21 presented the results of the light reporting exercise. CCSA supported the creation of an inter-agency task team whose function would be to harmonize the exercise with similar, existing reporting systems; develop an online database for its results that meets the requirements of different partners; and oversee the initiative's updating and expansion. The creation of this team was also endorsed by the PARIS21 Steering Committee in November 2006.

Development of methodology for a national strategy for the development of statistics

17. PARIS21 produces methodological advice and guidance to assist countries with their strategic planning efforts.[3] Among the papers produced in 2006 are the following:

(a) "Some issues in design and implementation planning for a national strategy for the development of statistics". This paper identifies some leading issues that need to be given careful thought through the national strategies processes,

[3] See http://www.paris21.org/knowledgebase/.

mainly during the design and implementation planning phases; provides possible solutions to these issues; and illustrates how they have been handled in selected countries;

(b) "Developing a policy-based national strategy for the development of statistics". This paper is intended to provide advice and a straightforward checklist to help those facing the task of designing and implementing a national strategy in response to a major statement of government development policy;

(c) "Mainstreaming sectoral statistics: a manual for planning an integrated statistical system". This paper provides guidance on how to integrate sectoral statistical development into the system-wide development of national statistics.

Satellite programmes

18. The Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics identified six priority actions for the statistical community. An Action Plan advisory board was established to supervise implementation of this work, and it endorsed the proposal that the PARIS21 secretariat implement three of these activities: (a) support to strategic planning in statistics; (b) improving the efficiency and effectiveness of household surveys through the International Household Survey Network (IHSN); and (c) an accelerated data programme in pilot countries to make urgent improvements for monitoring national and international development policy, including the Millennium Development Goals. These last two actions were proposed to be run through the PARIS21 secretariat as "satellite programmes". In early 2006, the PARIS21 Steering Committee and relevant bodies within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development approved the inclusion of these pilot satellite programmes in the PARIS21 secretariat work programme.

19. The overall goal of IHSN is to bring survey producers, sponsors and users together to improve the use of survey data for policymaking and monitoring. The Network will identify, promote and implement coordinated and sustainable solutions to problems of availability and timeliness, reliability and relevance, comparability and dissemination and use of household survey data. To achieve these goals, IHSN will conduct four main activities: (a) survey planning; (b) harmonization and development of data collection instruments; (c) production of survey data dissemination tools and guidelines; and (d) establishment of a central survey and census catalogue. An important priority is to closely link IHSN work with national strategies to provide country statisticians with tools needed to implement the main parts of the national strategies in order to improve data collection and its availability.

20. The accelerated data programme is a pilot programme intended to assist up to 12 countries in undertaking urgent improvements to produce consistent results for monitoring progress and measuring change in key development indicators, including the Millennium Development Goals, by 2010. The aim will be to review existing data and to identify what needs to be done to fill data gaps for those indicators, improve quality and develop an adequate baseline. The basic approach will be for pilot countries to identify a core set of indicators based on national priorities as set out in the countries' poverty reduction strategies, alignment with Millennium Development Goals indicators and relevance to International Development Association activities. The approach to be taken in each country will depend on specific circumstances, but essentially there are three possible steps: identify,

document and disseminate existing survey data; analyse existing data and assess the past survey programme; and review survey programmes in line with the national strategy, and if appropriate develop a more efficient and effective programme.

21. Although the "Measuring democracy, human rights and governance" (Metagora) project is physically hosted within the structure of the PARIS21 secretariat as are the satellite programmes above, it has a separate governance structure led by its own steering committee of donors. In 2006, Metagora consolidated the achievements of its pilot phase and its steering committee approved a second phase of project activities, to begin in 2007. The project focuses on methods, tools and frameworks for measuring democracy, human rights and governance.

IV. Future directions of PARIS21 work

22. In 2007, PARIS21 will address the key challenge of supporting strategy implementation, while continuing to assist those countries still at the design phase. In close collaboration with partners, PARIS21 will directly assist countries in advocating for support of national strategies implementation and the integration of statistical development in overall development policy processes. PARIS21 will support quality reviews of national strategies, including through the facilitation of peer reviews. The work programme for 2007 will also include the production of specific studies and guidance on issues related to statistical development, the further development and expansion of the light reporting exercise and regional events on strategic planning to be held in Africa, the Arab States, Asia and Latin America.

V. Points for discussion

23. **The Statistical Commission may wish to comment on the progress and future directions of PARIS21 work.**